

Public Lands Committee

January 31, 2022 | 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm
Riverside, Laurel Room

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order | *Chair Wayne Butts*

Custer County Commissioner Steve Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from September 2021, Twin Falls County Commissioner Jack Johnson seconded. motion carried.

Land Trust Conservation Update | *Teri Murrison, Executive Director, Idaho Coalition of Lands Trust*

Idaho needs land trusts. Why? Because it is growing. They do a few things. Mainly conservation. The primary goal of land trusts is keeping working land working. The trusts can help keep the ability to manage lands where it belongs. The trusts can create balance.

Conservation easements. County can collect taxes on these easements. These easements benefit hunters and the economy as well. Allows farmers and ranchers to keep working. Donated easements are tax deductible.

Communication between counties and agencies is very important. Something else that can be done is a natural resource plan. These plans lay out the values and concepts for everyone to understand and review.

Working with the Farm Bureau and they will be reaching out to counties for their input.

What are some of the drawbacks in regards to land trusts? Some are worried about personal property rights, some think the property comes off the tax rolls (it doesn't), and some just have a negative view of them. Need to proactively work to determine which lands are most important and how to maintain that property.

Small acre farms are having a hard time working with their land trusts because the work is cumbersome and the trusts are focused on the larger farms. How do we protect those smaller farms? They need more funding and the property owners need to have a match that most don't have.

BLM Update | Jarod Blades, PhD Branch Chief - Resources and Science, Bureau of Land Management – Idaho Office

Leadership has changed. DOI priorities: infrastructure, wildlife, wildfire, climate.

Drought – All of Idaho is in a drought. May have some operational changes to address it. With livestock there may be quicker rotations. There have been temporary reductions in water availability.

Fire – Idaho was pretty lucky. Hells Canyon was hit pretty hard. Gearing up for a big year. Been going through a workforce transformation. Moving seasonal employees to permanent hires and are working to have increase pay. The rural partnerships have garnered notice in other states. BLM has completed about 30,000 acres of rehabilitation.

Wind/energy – There are two big projects: 1) Lava ridge (putting in turbines). There were two scoping meetings. The scoping report is done and available. 2) Salmon falls wind energy: plan of development. Bigger turbines. There are solar energy projects happening in the same area.

The Owyhee Land Exchange conveyed 31,000 acres. It was for consistent management.

Wildhorse/burrows – Helicopters and shoots were used to collect horses. Some of them will be returned.

Good neighbor authority – There are contracts with the state to perform certain things. This year there will be a new funding opportunity.

Infrastructure: creating jobs, especially in tribal lands but job creation in the other area listed above as well.

Salmon Falls project: Some commissioners hear a lot of negative public input. What is the plan for the turbines when they come down? How are we going to recycle them? The hope is that it is in the plan for decommission. Will follow up. We are looking at trying to mitigate the issues that come with these.

Is there a policy in regards to cloud seeding? Not aware of any policies.

Wildfire & IDL Planning for the Future | Dustin Miller, Director, Idaho Department of Lands

Working on the budget and a couple of other items. Mandate is to maximize revenue for our lands.

We harvested thousands of acres board feet. This is great revenue. Administered 2400 leases for things such as crop leases and cottage sites, mineral/gas leases. \$85M to beneficiaries. We help citizens to understand how to use and protect lands.

One of the biggest things IDL does is fire suppression. They are a big part of the Good Neighbor Authority as well.

Fire: the states around Idaho got hit hard. Fire season came on strong in July. We had met or exceeded metrics. Many fires escaped and became quite large. There were resources that Idaho was unable to refill. The Governor issued a disaster emergency so there were more resources available. This gave access to the National Guard. IDL protects 6.3M acres. There were more than 400 fires, which was more than 142% of the average.

IDL is trying to do more education and preparedness. Trying to futureproof the IDL.

Legislation: hazard pay and the other is preventing damage to our endowment lands (HB468).

Sage Grouse Recovery Discussion & Federal Lands Update | *Joshua Uriarte, Species Program Manager & Policy Advisor; Jace Hogg, Federal Lands Coordinator, Governor's Office of Conservation*

Idaho is still operating from the 2015 plan. The administration wanted to look at this issue again. What are the new or even the same threats? Some threats are: impact to gravel pits, energy providers are stating that it is hard to get power to new customers (certain zones are restricted), access roads for infrastructure. Some of the planning maps need updated. The BLM plan states that the plan maps will be updated every five years but that hasn't happened yet.

Need to review the triggers for sage grouse plans. These triggers either have more or less restrictions. Sage brush can impact the ground as well. Going to look at predators as well.

Regional Forester Update | *Dave Rosenkrance, Deputy Regional Forester, Intermountain Region, Forest Service*

Congress passed the infrastructure act. Provides the forest services with funding for fire suppression. It also provides funding for collaboration. We have hired for many different positions. There are new strategies in regards to fire sheds. Some of the highest risks are in Idaho. A goal was to double the number of acres treated but with the new funding, it will probably be about four times the amount treated.

The funding hasn't quite come through yet but the office is working on a plan to allocate it. There is a lot of work being done on the recreation front. There are two new joint chief projects.

There is a default allocation and this is what counties will receive for FY22.



Secure Rural Schools Discussion | *Darrin Parker, Natural Resources Director, Senator Risch's Office*

As of today, the bill is being held at the desk. Likely to move forward in the continuing resolution package. Favored to get PILT also.

Skip: need to watch WOTUS and what the administration's 30 by 30 plan is. HR 1755 to establish more wilderness. HR6435, it is a fix to the SRS. SRS was originally written for counties to determine how they would spend their title funds. That was locked in in 2013. Title 3 are the only funds that counties have authority to determine how to spend. If you don't determine, there is a default for allocation. There is an attempt to change that. Some counties elect to not take SRS funds and take funding based on timber receipts. This will go to budget and finance for a score. If this doesn't pass in time there will be zero allocation for title 3 funds.

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 pm

Public Lands Committee

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